

GET INVOLVED:

INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
IN CAMPUS LIFE



Emily Yates, International Student Advisor II
Samantha Clement, International Student Advisor II
Texas A&M University

NAFSA Region III Conference, Oklahoma City, OK

INTRODUCTIONS

- Texas A&M
 - College Station, Texas
 - 50,000 students
 - 4,780 international students
 - 3,780 graduate students; 1,000 undergraduates
- International Student Services
 - 10 full-time advisors plus support staff
- Why we wanted to do this session
 - Students tend to stick to their nationality/cultural groups
 - Lack of time for office to coordinate programs
 - Saw a need to examine why involvement is important and how to effectively partner with other campus groups

CHALLENGES & THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Your workload
- Barriers for students
 - lack of awareness, funds, time, transportation
 - faculty support and academic issues
 - family pressure to succeed academically
 - feeling unwelcome
- Institutional culture, support
 - Texas A&M values the 'other' education
 - Institution's master plan or mission statement
- How you market
 - How is the message being communicated?

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Decades of research on undergraduate student experience
- Starting to be more research for international undergraduates
- Still very little research related to international graduate students and involvement

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Importance of on-campus involvement
 - Impact of college experience is largely determined by level of involvement in academic and non-academic activities (*Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991*)
 - 71% of [undergraduates] said involvement has a very strong contribution to overall experience (*TAMU Student Life Studies, 2009*)
 - 70-80% [of TAMU undergraduates] are involved in campus organizations (*TAMU Student Life Studies, 2003*)
 - Decades of research show involvement is associated with high levels of learning and personal development (*Chickering & Reisser, 1993*)
- Involvement & mental, physical health
 - Involvement impacts the mental and physical health of students (TAMU Student Counseling Service)
 - Too much can have a negative effect on wellbeing, academics (*TAMU Student Health Services*)

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Involved students have been found to be...
 - More likely to have a system for time management
 - More likely to have a plan for studying
 - Less likely to turn in work that does not reflect their best effort
 - Better equipped to achieve future career goals, transferrable skills
(Student Life Studies, 2003)
- Effect of international students' integration in campus life
 - scored higher than American counterparts on student-faculty interaction and technology use; *(Zhao, Kuh, and Carini, 2005)*
 - Spent less time relaxing, socializing; less satisfied compared with American students; *(Zhao, Kuh, and Carini)*
 - "...those international students who do cultivate friendships with American students tend to adapt and adjust more easily *(Brockner, et al., 1977; Furnman & Alibhai, 1985).*"

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- International students are more likely to utilize technology
 - “Compared with Americans, senior international students...used technology more frequently...” (*Zhao, Kuh, and Carini*)
 - “...may use technology instead of talking directly to peers or instructors to avoid embarrassing exchanges created by language barriers and unfamiliarity with cultural idioms.” (*Zhao, Kuh, and Carini*)
- Considerations for undergraduate students and graduate students
 - Average population age
 - Family/faculty advisor pressure
 - Family responsibilities
 - Connection to the institution

COMMUNICATE THE VALUE

- University administrators
 - Cost/benefit to university, department
 - Contribution to core mission
 - Proper use of student fees/funding
 - “If we don’t, who will?”
 - Potential for partnerships
 - Impact on retention
- Faculty and Staff
 - Opportunity to build relationships & combine efforts
 - Potential to increase value of students as employees
 - Helps students stay focused on academic pursuits
 - Welcome opportunity to interact positively with students

COMMUNICATE THE VALUE

- Students
 - Gain leadership experience, communication skills
 - Improve English language skills
 - Establish a professional network
 - Essential to learn how to work with others for their career goals
 - Important to highlight:
 - Scholarship opportunities through participation
 - Free?
 - Prizes
 - Food
 - One-time event = no further commitment

COMMUNICATE THE VALUE

- Students
 - Specific marketing to international students
 - E.g., community service in global terms
 - Maintain balance with academics
 - To consider in planning stages:
 - Prepare domestic students to welcome international students
 - Accommodate dietary and cultural restrictions

TECHNOLOGY

- Tap into the resources students are already using
 - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
- Consider creating a work-associated Facebook profile; office page
- Text message system for sending very important news
 - GroupMe.com
- Send info about new student events early
 - College receptions, 'week of welcome' activities, etc.

TECHNOLOGY

- Online registration system for events through website
- Word-of-mouth through student organizations online – their Facebook pages, groups, etc.
- Utilize technology as a tool, but not a replacement for face-to-face interactions
- Outcomes-based assessment– are we doing what we say we are doing?

SUCCESS STORIES AT TEXAS A&M

- [Dinner in a US Home](#)
- [Extended orientation](#)
- [International Student Association](#)
- [International Student Conference](#)
- [International Student Mentor Association](#)
- International Tailgate
- [Leadership & Service Center programs](#)
- Using technology to promote events from other offices through ISS communication
- Welcome Party

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Promote leadership development programs
- Promote community service opportunities
- Promote involvement opportunities before students arrive
- Utilize current students to intentionally encourage new students to participate in campus activities
- Market intramural sports – sports are universal!
- Take cultural adjustment and college student development stages into consideration when marketing programs
- Communicate that involvement can be major-related, culture-related, interest-related
- Work with [Student Life Studies](#) (assessment office) to research student experience

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Other best practices?
- Think about what offices on your campus are already doing – what programs would be of interest to your students?
- What are some ways that you can market events and programs more effectively on your campus?
- Are you aware of any research or assessment related to international students getting involved on campus? Is your campus doing any assessment in this area?

RESOURCES & CITATIONS

- Bockner, et al., (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students. *International Journal of Psychology*, 12, 277-297.
- Chickering, A.W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity (2nd ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Furnham, A. & Alibhai, N. (1985). The friendship networks of foreign students: A replication and extension of the functional model. *International journal of psychology*, 20(6), 709-722.
- Pascarella, E. and Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students. Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Texas A&M [Student Life Studies](#), *Student Involvement Survey Part I and II*, 2003.
- Texas A&M [Student Life Studies](#), *Longitudinal Study of Involvement*, 2009.
- Zhao, C., Kuh, G. and Carini R., 2005; *Comparison of International & American Student Engagement in Effective Educational Practices*. *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol 76, issue 2; 209-231

- Meetings with Texas A&M Staff:
 - Giesla Lin ([Student Counseling Services](#))
 - Rhonda Rahn ([Student Health Services](#))
 - Ieva Romenkova (Texas A&M undergraduate student)
 - Kathryn Sturtevant and Jake Hayes ([Student Activities](#))
 - Krista Tacey (Director of ISS)

FINAL THOUGHT

“...a campus cannot simply recruit a critical mass of international students; it must also intentionally arrange it’s resources so that international and American students benefit in desired ways from one another’s presence.”

Comparison of International & American Student Engagement in Effective Educational Practices

Zhao, Kuh, and Carini, 2005